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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 003256

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TAGS: PGOV PREL I2

SUBJECT: DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER ZAWBAI NOT TROUBLED BY  
SEARCH OF SUNNI MOSQUE, BUT STILL FEELS MARGINALIZED

REF: BAGHDAD 3517

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Daniel V. Speckhard for Reasons 1.4 (b)  
) and (d).

¶11. (C) Summary. On August 30, the Charge, PolMil Counselor Maerkle, and Australian Brigadier General Cantwell met with Deputy Prime Minister Salaam Zawbai (Tawafuq). Zawbai said he was not attending the Ministerial Council for National Security (MCNS) because he is being "marginalized" by the Prime Minister. He complained of corruption, especially in the Ministry of Interior, and said that Iraqi government leaders need to get out of the International Zone more often.  
End summary.

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ABU HANIFA MOSQUE AND BAGHDAD SECURITY PLAN  
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¶12. (C) Brigadier Cantwell briefed Zawbai on an operation earlier in the day in which Coalition forces had conducted a search of the Sunni holy site Abu Hanifa Mosque. Zawbai raised no objection to the operation. He said that he understood that securing the mosque was critical to the transparency of the Baghdad Security Plan and had heard that the search was conducted in a professional manner. He did note disappointment, however, that as a Sunni Deputy Prime Minister charged with the security portfolio, he was not part of the process. Zawbai added that prior to his meeting with the Charge, Iraqi National Security Advisor Mowaffak al-Rubaie had called him to inform him of the Abu Hanifa operation - while the operation was occurring, not prior. This added fuel to Zawbai's argument that he was being marginalized by the rest of the government.

¶13. (C) Brigadier Cantwell also briefed Zawbai on the Baghdad Security Plan. Zawbai focused on Brigadier Cantwell's statement that soldiers are helping to re-establish basic services. Zawbai asked why Iraqis are not being hired to do this work. He specifically cited garbage removal as an area where unemployed Iraqis could be put to work. Brigadier Cantwell responded that in fact Iraqi contractors are being used for these types of services.

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ABSENCES FROM NATIONAL SECURITY MEETINGS  
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¶14. (C) The Charge noted that Zawbai had not attended the last few meetings of the Ministerial Council for National Security (MCNS). (See reftel for account of most recent MCNS meeting.) Zawbai responded that he is not attending because the Prime Minister is trying to marginalize Sunni leaders. Zawbai argued that Maliki listens only to his own people while ignoring others. The Prime Minister does not want Zawbai and other Sunnis to join in the process, he said. He

complained that although Zawbai is a deputy prime minister, Maliki often sends National Security Advisor Mowaffak al-Rubaie to attend meetings instead of Zawbai. Charge pressed Zawbai to participate in the MCNS as a way to ensure his voice is being heard and underscored that the U.S. and UK Ambassadors and the Commanding General and Deputy Commanding General are interested in hearing his views in this key security forum.

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COMPLAINTS OF CORRUPTION  
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15. (C) Zawbai complained of corruption in government ministries, singling out the Ministry of Interior as a particular problem. He cited an incident where two cars were involved in a confrontation with the police. The cars fled to the Ministry of the Interior while being pursued by the police. There they took refuge while the MOI guards prevented the police from entering. He also cited an internal MOI unit known as the "Fourth Platoon" as being responsible for illegal activities. Zawbai said that one specific focus should be shutting down the checkpoints set up by MOI and Ministry of Defense employees. The Charge responded that the GOI needs to take strong action to curb abuses.

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IRAQI LEADERS AND THE INTERNATIONAL ZONE  
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16. (C) Zawbai complained that Iraqi leaders spend too much time in the International Zone. He said that Iraqis must see that their leaders are "brave" and getting out into the

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community. Zawbai described several trips he had made outside the IZ, including a visit to a hospital where he observed a lack of basic supplies such as antibiotics and X-ray film. He also said that he has continued to use an office in the Mansour district of Baghdad even though that office was at one point surrounded by militia forces. He claimed that he stood up to the militia intimidation and had not allowed them to take over.

17. (C) COMMENT: Following this meeting and a subsequent phone call by Charge, Zawbai did attend the September 3 MCNS (septel), in which Baghdad security and securing the mosques were discussed. END COMMENT.

SPECKHARD